Dromornis stirtoni

Dromornis stirtoni, colloquially known as **Stirton's thunderbird**, a member of the family Dromornithidae, is the second largest flightless bird found through fossil evidence. It was three metres (10 feet) tall and weighed half a tonne (1100 lbs).[1] It inhabited subtropical open woodlands in Australia during the Late Miocene and may have been carnivorous. It was heavier than *Aepyornis* and taller than the moa. Due to the poor fossil record of *Dromornis australis* (the type species of the genus) and the large time gap between the two *Dromornis* species, *D. stirtoni* may eventually be reassigned to the genus *Bullockornis*.

This species had a long neck and stub-like wings, rendering it flightless.[2] Its legs were powerful, but it is not believed to have been a fast runner.[2] The bird's beak was large and immensely powerful, leading early researchers to believe that it was used to shear through tough plant stalks.[2] However, recently others have argued that the size of the beak suggests that the bird was a carnivore.[2]

The only recorded location of the species is at Alcoota Station in the central region of Australia's Northern Territory. When she discovered it, Patricia Vickers-Rich named the bird after fellow palaeontologist Ruben A. Stirton.[3]

Dromornis stirtoni

Temporal range: Tortonian

Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	†Gastornithiformes
Family:	†Dromornithidae
Genus:	†*Dromornis*
Species:	†***D. stirtoni***

Binomial name

†***Dromornis stirtoni***

P. Rich, 1979

See also

- Australian megafauna
- Dromornithidae
- History of Australia

References

1. Musser, Anne (November 2018). "*Dromornis stirtoni*" (https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/australia-over-time/extinct-animals/dromornis-stirtoni/). *The Australian Museum*. Retrieved 15 May 2019.
2. Ellis, Richard (2004). *No Turning Back: The Life and Death of Animal Species* (https://archive.org/details/noturningbacklif00elli). New York: Harper Perennial. p. 102 (https://archive.org/details/noturningbacklif00elli/page/102). ISBN 0-06-055804-0.
3. " *Dromornis* Der schwerste Vogel aller Zeiten" (https://www.grin.com/document/281527). *GRIN* (in German). Retrieved 15 May 2019.

- Rich, P. (1979): The Dromornithidae, an extinct family of large ground birds endemic to Australia. *Bureau of National Resources, Geology and Geophysics Bulletin* **184**: 1–196.

External links

- Exhibit of reconstructed skeleton (https://web.archive.org/web/20070129132553/http://amol.org.au/discovernet/alcoota/dromornis.asp)

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